

Bridgeville Cat Positive for Rabies; Public Health Warns Residents of Main Street

DOVER – Delaware's Division of Public Health (DPH) is warning residents of Main Street (Business Route 13), Bridgeville with nearby intersecting roads of Fawn Road and Redden Road, who may have been exposed to a feral cat, that the DPH Lab found the animal to be rabid on Wednesday, April 5, 2017. The black, domestic shorthair has bitten or scratched at least one individual in this area, and has been euthanized.

Anyone who thinks they might have been bitten, scratched or come in contact with this cat's saliva or that of another feral in the area should immediately contact their health care provider or call the DPH Rabies Program at 302-744-4995. An epidemiologist is available 24/7. DPH is placing traps in the area to catch any feral cats that potentially have been exposed. Members of the public are asked to stay away from the traps.

Residents should take precautions against rabies by:

- Avoiding wild and feral animals
- Ensuring their pets are up-to-date with rabies shots, and
- Keeping pets indoors or, while outside, supervising them on a leash.

Warm spring and summer temperatures lead to more outdoor activities, which increases possible exposure to rabies through contact with animals such as bats, raccoons, skunks and foxes.

Since January 2017, DPH has performed rabies tests on 23 animals, three of which were confirmed to be rabid, including

this cat, one raccoon and one dog. This is the first 2017 lab-confirmed case of a rabies in which it is possible that humans may have been exposed.

Rabies in humans and animals cannot be cured once symptoms appear. If the animal is of unknown origin, or unavailable to be quarantined or tested, the Division of Public Health recommends that people receive postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment, a series of four vaccinations, as a precautionary measure.

Rabies is an infectious disease affecting the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Infection can occur through the bite or scratch of an infected animal or if saliva from such an animal gets into the eyes, nose, mouth or an opening in the skin

Fortunately, rabies is also almost 100 percent preventable. DPH recommends that members of the public take the necessary steps to stay clear of exposure to rabies. Rabies prevention starts with the animal owner. Vaccination of pets and livestock is a crucial factor in rabies prevention.

- All dogs, cats and ferrets 6 months of age and older, are required by Delaware law to be vaccinated against rabies. Consider vaccinating valuable livestock and horses. Animals that have frequent contact with humans should also be vaccinated.
- Pet owners can reduce the possibility of pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free.
- Spaying or neutering your pet may reduce the tendency to roam or fight and thus reduce the chance they will be exposed to rabies.
- Do not feed or water your pets outdoors; bowls can attract wild and stray animals.
- Keep your garbage securely covered.
- Do not handle unfamiliar animals, including cats and dogs, even if they appear friendly.

For more information on the Delaware Division of Public Health's rabies program visit: <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/rabies.html> or call 1-866-972-9705 or 302-744-4995. For more information on rabies visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.